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GATEWAY TO IMPERIAL COUNTY

Calexico honors city's veterans

SUNSET OBSERVANCE



Rep. Bob Filner, D-Chula Vista, speaks to veterans and their families about the importance of supporting veterans at the Calexico Veterans Day observance Thursday. Calexico American Legion Post 90 Cmdr. Jose Vindiola (left) and State Rep. Manuel Perez, D-Coachella, (seated) listen.

BY DAVID STEFFEN

CALEXICO — Veterans, their relatives and community leaders gathered near the Veterans Memorial Wall here under the setting sun Thursday to pay homage to those who served in the armed forces.

"It had a beautiful turnout — people I've known all my life," said Jose Vindiola, commander of the Calexico American Legion Post 90.

He thanked many of the veterans and community

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leaders present during the observance and said he enjoyed the opportunity to honor Calxico veterans.

"I think it's important because younger generations don't realize the sacrifices the veteran goes through during his time in the military," Vindiola said.

Calxico resident Daniel Santillan, an Army veteran who served in Vietnam, said veterans served their country even if they did not agree with the wars in which they fought. He said it was a small but great Veterans Day observance.

"Whether you were against or for war, nonetheless we answered our country's call," Santillan said. "I was against the war when I went but didn't go to Canada or Mexico."

Rep. Bob Filner, D-Chula Vista, spoke during the observance about the importance of taking care of

veterans when they finish their service. He is chairman of the House of Representatives Veterans' Affairs committee.

"There's nothing more important than saying 'thank you' to our veterans," Filner said.

He said the Veterans Day observance near the Calxico Veterans Memorial Wall was fitting and said he was glad to be present.

"Calxico has worked hard to get this setting, and it's the appropriate place — a place that makes you reflect," he said. "I was proud to be here."

Vindiola said he was glad to honor veterans and see many longtime community friends present. He plans to speak at next year's Veterans Day observance in Calxico.

"God willing, if he gives me another year of life, I'll be here next year," Vindiola said.